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Preface

The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), in consultation with other Agencies in the Department of Health and Human Services, initiated the Healthy Aging Project to enhance and promote the health of older people. A major objective of the Healthy Aging Project is to identify, synthesize and disseminate evidence and expert opinion on health promotion and disease prevention interventions that are evidence-based. HCFA is sponsoring reports that present evidence and expert opinion to assist public and private sector organizations in their efforts to improve the delivery of Medicare-covered preventive benefits and promote behavioral risk factor reduction. These reports provide comprehensive, science-based information on effective and cost-effective interventions targeting the senior population. RAND is producing these reports under a HCFA contract.

HCFA expects that these evidence reports will inform peer review organizations, individual health plans, providers and purchasers, including Medicare and Medicaid, as well as the health care system as a whole by providing important information to help improve the delivery and quality of preventive health care for older people.

We welcome written comments on this evidence report. They may be sent to:

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The Southern California Evidence-Based Practice Center

The Southern California Evidence-Based Practice Center is part of the Evidence-Based Practice Program sponsored by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research. One of 12 such Centers nationwide, the Center conducts systematic reviews and technology assessments of all aspects of health care; performs research on improving the methods of synthesizing the scientific evidence and developing evidence reports and technology assessments; and provides technical assistance to other organizations in their efforts to translate evidence reports and technology assessments into guidelines, performance measures, and other quality-improvement tools.

The Center combines the talents of RAND and its five affiliated regional health care institutions: the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of California, San Diego; Cedars-Sinai Medical Center; the University of Southern California; and Value Health Sciences. In addition, through the VA/RAND/ University of California Field Program "Center for the Study of Health Care Provider Behavior," four Department of Veterans Affairs facilities collaborate with the Center. The Center is also affiliated with five health services research training programs.

The Southern California Center is the natural outcome of more than 20 years of work by RAND and its affiliated institutions in reviewing the biomedical literature for evidence of benefits, harms, and costs; using meta-analysis, decision analysis, and cost-effectiveness analysis to synthesize the literature; developing measures of clinical appropriateness and practice guidelines; developing and assessing medical review criteria; and developing and assessing performance measures and other tools for translating evidence-based knowledge into clinical practice. The hallmark of this work has been (a) its multi-disciplinary nature: RAND and its affiliated institutions combine the talents of clinicians, health services researchers, epidemiologists, statisticians, economists, and advanced methods experts in meta-analysis and decision analysis; (b) the advancement of knowledge about the methods for performing literature reviews, synthesizing evidence, and developing practice guidelines or review criteria; and (c) the emphasis on developing and evaluating products for use in the real world of health care delivery.

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